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## THE SOUTH, PAST AND PRESENT

THE southern states are the rural section of our great country. Consider the roll of cities: New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Brooklyn, with their millions; Boston, St. Louis, Baltimore, with upward of half a million each—the last two, it is true, being border cities; Cincinnati, San Francisco, New Orleans, with upward of a quarter of a million souls; the last being the only distinctively southern city that can be called great, and that the least of the ten and only in the third rank. Then consider the long roll of cities of the fourth rank—numbering, say, from one hundred to two hundred and fifty thousand souls: Providence, Jersey City, Newark, Pittsburg, Rochester, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Omaha, Denver, Kansas City, Louisville, Washington—the last two again being border cities; in this list no distinctively southern name occurs. Of towns of the fifth rank—say from fifty to one hundred thousand souls—such as Cambridge, Lynn, Lawrence, Lowell, Fall River, Worcester, Springfield, in Massachusetts; Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, in Connecticut—the northeastern and northwestern states can boast a number too great to be enumerated here; whereas in the southern we have in this rank: Richmond, Charleston, Atlanta, Nashville, Memphis, and perhaps a town or two in Texas—half a dozen South to forty or fifty North.

These are interesting considerations, and to many they seem rather curious and interesting than important; but in fact the distribution of population is a matter of fundamental importance: it determines the character of a civilization; it is the underpinning of history. The dominant characteristic of a rural district is conservatism. This has been exemplified in history over and over again. The Pagans (and surely it is superfluous to state that no reflection is intended), they who clave inveterately to the old heathen religions, were country people, as the very term imports. In rural districts and secluded mountain valleys heathenism lingered for centuries after it had become extinct in the towns. Again, in the age of the Protestant Reformation, the parts of England most remote from the capital—Yorkshire, Northumberland, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Devon—adhered to the old mediæval faith after London had been thoroughly reformed. Fifty

years ago, Clough described Boston as "the Puritan great mother city." The description is no longer applicable; Boston is not now a Puritan city. John Fiske has lately said that there is more Puritanism in the South today than in New England, and I can testify to the accuracy of the generalization. In the course of a winter spent in Charleston, I was struck by the survival of old-fashioned, low-church evangelicalism there, in my communion. I beheld theological types still flourishing which up to that time had been to me purely historical. There is more Puritanism in Charleston than in Boston, in South Carolina than in Massachusetts.

Until the Revolutionary War, slavery was known, of course, in all the colonies, but the South conserved the system long after it had been abandoned by the rest of the country. Other causes no doubt conspired to bring about its extinction in the North and its perpetuation in the South; but in the last analysis I believe that it was not any conviction as to the benefits of slavery, but rather this intensely conservative sentiment that led the South to cling to it so desperately. Politically, moreover, the South jealously conserved the particularistic principle of the old Confederation of 1776-1789, which was outgrown in the North and West certainly as early as Webster's day and the dawn of the Whig party — say by the year 1830; from that time the Federal, national idea was uppermost northward, whereas southward we see the states' rights idea preserved for another generation, along with its economic corollary, slavery.

Furthermore, in its culture the old South was extremely conservative; Addison, Pope, and Dr. Johnson were its literary standards; Cowper was too recent to be classic, for he lived as late as the year 1800; Shelley and Keats — not to mention Wordsworth and Tennyson, who were still living — were literary upstarts, incomprehensible, and to be ignored. A delicate illustration of this conservatism of taste occurs to me in the æsthetic field. The department of fine art most characteristic of the old South was, without doubt, miniature painting: a refined, aristocratic art that flourished under the patronage of old and wealthy families. As late as the year 1860 was living the Carolina miniature painter, Charles Fraser, who continued until the very eve of the War of Secession the traditions of his art inherited from the eighteenth century.

At present we are entering an era of profound and rapid changes; the forces of conservatism are giving way all along the line. This new and untried situation is depressing to the conservative: the

growth of Republicanism, the Bible as literature, German theology, the new poetry, realistic fiction, impressionist art, the nude in art, the rage for gymnastics and athletics — but there is nothing but to make the best of it; the South is being drawn into the current of the world's life. The economic explanation of these phenomena is a new distribution of population — the growth of cities like Jacksonville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chattanooga (the A, B, C of the new South), Knoxville, Nashville, Memphis, Little Rock, Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio. The South is still relatively the rural section of the country, but absolutely its rising cities are growing with remarkable rapidity and are offering many attractions to residents. As in the old world, our northeastern and northwestern states, and Australia, so also in the South: population is gravitating toward the cities. This movement has been greatly accelerated by improved facilities for transportation and communication, and both of these influences — railroad development and centralization of population — are bringing about an industrial revolution; and upon all of these the new civilization is to be based.

The old theology is going, and with it happily is going the spirit of controversy and irrational prejudice. There is an abatement of intolerance, a welcome increase of the spirit of liberality. In theological centers and circles the writings of foreign thinkers are read and studied. Matthew Arnold has shown us how to use the Hebrew Scriptures as the literature of a people among whom the thought of righteousness, of right conduct, was paramount. In the externals of worship there are many changes; in the Episcopal church an infusion of ritual may be noted, and in other religious bodies a marked liturgical tendency. The most remarkable phenomenon of the hour in southern culture is the literary awakening, the humanistic movement — a veritable southern renaissance. Until recently, I myself have presided for several years over a literary club at Sewanee composed of a few professors, advanced students, and ladies interested in literature. The club has just published its papers, the result of last year's study, under the title, *Matthew Arnold and the Spirit of the Age*; and this publication has brought me, from all over the South, programs and syllabi of similar clubs. I was aware before of the existence of the movement, but I have been impressed even to astonishment by these evidences of its extent and earnestness. To the superficial observer this enthusiasm for culture seems superficial, and he sneers at it as only a passing "fad;" actually it is a movement the strength and vitality of which

cannot be overestimated, and which affords the most promising outlook for general culture that the South has ever seen. Naturally, like all energy, it is in need of guidance.

The bearing of the preceding considerations upon our educational problem must be manifest to all. The point is that we should pay more attention to the study of literature and to the literary aspects of our studies. Literature may be described as the deposit of human nature in successive ages. Nations and generations have left this record of themselves, and it would be well for us to enter more fully and deeply than we have hitherto entered into our rich heritage. Consider what we have in the literature of a race or an age : what stimulus to thought, feeling, imagination, aspiration, moral energy. We hear complaint that the Bible is no longer read as it used to be ; the remedy for this decline of interest has already been pointed out ; let it be studied as the literature, legal, historical, poetic, philosophic, ethical, religious, prophetic, of the Hebrew race, as a great national literature that contains more truth about God than any other, and its power and charm will be felt anew. The vexed question of the study of the classics has lately been brought again into prominence by the publication of statistics showing the decline in popularity of the classical courses at Harvard University, where, owing to the freedom of the elective system, such changes of taste and preference are speedily and clearly registered. Such decline cannot be the fault of the classics themselves, for the human interest of the Greek and Roman literatures has not been lessened, far less exhausted, by time ; their power to stimulate thought, to move the feelings and the will, to kindle the imagination, is as great as ever. The fault, therefore, must lie in the teachers, who must have neglected the literary, that is, the humane, aspect of these studies. We Americans are a practical people. We test everything by the standard of utility. Some may lament this fact, but it cannot be helped, nor is it, indeed, to be lamented. With us every study must stand the test of utility, and any that fails to meet this demand is slowly doomed. Now what can be more useful than the development of personality—the eliciting of all the powers of our complex nature ?—and this is the peculiar function of literature. We may rest assured that there will be no complaint of the inutility of a study that redounds to the expansion of personality, of life. Even history may be studied with literary regard, may be made to conduce to literary appreciation. What is it that makes Gibbon, Macaulay, and Froude classics, while their contemporaries, Robertson, Mitford, and Freeman are relegated to a lower

rank? It is that the former charm one by their literary style—the ultimate test of a classic. In the modern languages as well as the ancient, in teaching the French or German of our schools, the literary goal should never be lost sight of, as it can never be without linguistic loss. But of all national literatures one's own has most power over the affections. One's mother tongue is most potent to excite imagination, aspiration, reflection, action. Hence of all agencies for the development of personality, English literature is for us the most potent, containing, as it does, the whole body of Hebrew and early Christian literature in a translation that has never been excelled, if, indeed, it has ever been equaled or approached in its marvelous rendering of the spirit of the original. I would, therefore, that every teacher might be saturated with the spirit of English literature, and I am persuaded that success or failure in the profession may be measured by the degree of assimilation of that spirit.

In conclusion, I hope that it may not seem too Utopian, visionary, and remote to put in a plea for æsthetics; primarily for attention to that side of literature which appeals to that obscure blend of fancy and feeling which we denominate æsthetic. Here, in general, is our most grievous lack, both in the country at large, and in the southern states in particular. I would that the people of the growing communities, with mention of which this address began, might appreciate and take advantage of the present opportunity which, if lost, can never be recovered; that they would provide now for systems of parks and stately avenues bordered by shade trees and adorned with fountains and statues, for the sake of unborn generations; that these commercial communities might be dignified, beautified, ennobled, by some regard for æsthetic considerations, and so exert a molding, uplifting, and humanizing influence for all later time. The foundations of such æsthetic appreciation should be laid in the schools; but what can be hoped at present in this direction from the dreary utilitarianism, so blind to the highest utility, of our school and college class rooms? I would have these rooms decorated with a frieze blazoned with the most famous names, and upon the walls would have pictures hung—pictures of celebrated places and persons, for neglect of which modern photography leaves one without excuse. Upon shelves in corners of the rooms I would place vases and casts, choice specimens of sculpture and pottery, to refine the sense of form; and to cultivate the sense of color, in which Americans are woefully deficient, would have flowering plants in the windows, and some touch of bright drapery which, because it

would not do to obscure the light from the windows, might be run on rods across unsightly blackboards, when these were not in use. So one might add to the direct teaching of the names, views, and likenesses, the indirect and silently educating influences of good taste.

Our ideal should be to begin to cultivate literary and æsthetic appreciation among children at school and to develop that appreciation at college, so that our youth might be sent forth thence fully educated, comprehending the new situation in which they find themselves, equal to the task and the responsibility of leading the movement toward culture. I conclude with a paraphrase of a wise saying of an old Roman poet: "Happy is the teacher who understands the causes of things, the needs, the tendency of the times, for he will not make mistakes.

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